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Bagnoli: A City Project

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Synopsis

For its values, the Bagnoli-Coroglio area (in the western part of Naples) represents a greatly significant place for the city and its community.

The story of its transformation, from the cessation of the industrial activity until today, is very complex; it has lasted for about 20 years and has had a great influence on the social structure of a district that places great dreams and hopes in its regeneration.

The desire for a free beach and a public park for the city is indeed still waiting to be realized. But today we are at a turning point.

This contribution, that briefly reviews the main stages of this story, aims to highlight the entire process of the construction of the environmental redevelopment and rehabilitation project of the area, presenting it as an interweaving example of architecture, urban visions, urban planning, environmental restrictions, politics, legal events, but also an example of strong popular participation for the construction of a "City Project".

Key words: Urban visions, politics, landscapes, participation, conflicts.

1. Political-urban chronicle of the area

Bagnoli is a district in the western suburbs of the city. It has about 25 thousand inhabitants and covers an area of about 8 square kilometers. It overlooks the sea, on the Pozzuoli bay. In the Twentieth century, it became one of the industrial districts of Naples; in 1911 it became the headquarters of Italsider (later ILVA), a steel factory that had up to seven thousand workers.

The factory closed in 1993, the year that marked the start of the dismantling of the plants, followed by reclamation projects to clean up the area. In 1994, the first reclamation works were financed, but they were never completed due to problems mainly related to the soil pollution and instability. The Bagnoli Company, created in 1996 to manage the redevelopment works, dismantled most of the industrial buildings, but after six years of work it had completed only 30% of the reclamation. One of the main problems of this reclamation is a large surface in cement built on the sea in the 1960s during an expansion of ILVA, the so-called "colmata a mare". The removal of this large surface of cement, that still exists today, is considered a priority for the reclamation of Bagnoli.

In 2001, the Municipality of Naples purchased the lands on which there were ILVA and Eternit plants, and replaced the Bagnoli S.P.A. with the Urban Transformation Society (STU) that had to manage the redevelopment project of Bagnoli and the adjacent area of Coroglio. The STU was then replaced the following year by the Bagnolifutura company, which was supposed to regenerate Bagnoli after a decade of unfulfilled promises and designs never completed. The project to be implemented was adopted in 2005 by the Municipality of Naples as an executive urban plan and, among other things, it included the realization of a park, a beach, a "sports park", research infrastructures and facilities suitable for touristic reception.

A few years later, the whole project began to go into crisis; there have been many administrative problems, delays, failed auctions, blocks of funds and variations of projects. In 2011 there was a first requisition of the lands linked to the lack of the reclamation, and in 2013 the Naples Public Prosecutor seized the land owned by the company with the accusation of environmental disaster. In the same year, the mayor of Naples Luigi De Magistris, through a trade union decree, ordered to Fintecna company (which took over the ownership of the areas of the former Italsider plants, later ILVA) to proceed, to secure the sandy shore of Coroglio-Bagnoli, with the presentation of the project for the complete removal of the cement surface, and also ordered to the Cementir Italia company to provide for the realization of the works necessary for the safety of the contaminated site, according to the "the one who polluted is the one who must pay" principle. Subsequently, in 2014 the Bagnoli Futura company was put into liquidation.

Between September and December 2014, three legislative measures have substantially affected the Site of National Interest (SIN) Bagnoli-Coroglio, providing for its external administration and the subjugation to the Program for Environmental Reclamation and Urban Regeneration: the so-called "Sblocca-Italia" (Unblock Italy) legislative decree (DL 12 September 2014 n.133 -art.33), the relative conversion into law (L 164 of 11/11/2014), and the 2015 Stability Law (Law 190 of 23/12/2014). These legal acts represent a form of expropriation, not participated

but bottom-up, which delegitimize the role of the City, as an institution closer to the citizens and representative of the interests of the community and the territory.

These regulations wanted by the Italian Government were perceived as being able to cancel the function of the local Authority, and also to delegitimize and to take away responsibility from local communities, ending up generating strong doubts about the control of the public interest, as they put a large part of the Bagnoli lands under the control of a Commissioner and an Actuator, with the power to associate private individuals in the definition and approval of an economic-financial program and of an urban project, such as to constitute, without passing through the City Council, an automatic variant to the PRG (Piano Regolatore Generale, Local Strategic Plan).



Figure 1. Bagnoli's urban void.

2. A City Project

Simultaneously with the start of a long political battle for the reaffirmation of the right of Local Authorities to deal with the approval and implementation of the urban redevelopment program, the Municipality began to draw up a new urban plan of Bagnoli that would enhance the environmental and landscape features of the site, according to a sustainable economic-financial program where the contribution of private capital was possible.

"Transformative scenarios" were then identified, including the enhancement of the marine and coastal landscape of Bagnoli-Coroglio, the restoration of the natural morphology of the coast, the redesign of the park's borders, the landscape of the new settlements and the enhancement of the park. Later in 2015, the City Council of Naples approved the main points of the project, becoming the guarantor of the interests of the community.



Figure 2. Project history.

Points that can be summarized as follows:

- the realization of a public beach with a promenade along the sea;
- the prevision of an equipped and usable boardwalk;
- the definition of a light harbor activity that does not interfere with bathing;
- the reduction of the currently planned volumes, of considerable impact on the historical fabric of the district, and a new distribution of these volumes in a new organic landscape;
- the relaunch of the large equipped public park, made more usable by a diversification of functions ranging from leisure time, to sport, to music, to well-being, to other various attractors especially for young people;
- the enhancement of industrial archeology through a greater flexibility of the allocable functions, and also of the volumes available for various purposes including the private ones for tourism accommodation;
- the proposal for new relations between the park and industrial archeology, between the park and the production of goods and services;
- the stabilization of the planned residential functions, with shares of social housing.

After many disputes that saw the activation of the community through various forms of mobilization, in 2017 the Municipality of Naples, thanks to the great participatory power of the citizens, managed to get an inter-institutional agreement, signed by Government, Region and Municipality, which has put back at the center the never completed project of reclamation and urban regeneration of the area, but with assumptions totally different from the initial ones.



Figure 3. Public park project.

Thus, starting from the project presented by the city, a concrete agreement has been reached between institutions and citizens about the vision and objectives of the transformation of Bagnoli. Currently, technical meetings are being held in which representatives of the Municipality and the Region, the actuators subject indicated by the Government and representatives of the communities participate.

The goal is the construction of a shared strategy that leads to the definition of a concrete "City project", of which the city recognizes itself as an author. All these things want to show that the place (and its transformation) coincides with the process, understood as the complexity of different events, circumstances and actors. The architectural visions developed by the architects represent only a part of this process. Architects must get into these stories, know them and become active subjects. Our territories are changing very quickly, due to different forces (political, legal, ecological), architecture is slower. Bagnoli is an exemplary case. But nevertheless, the values of free beach and of public park, shared with the citizens, have always been preserved in all the projects.

The sustainability of an urban project is then in the reading, the understanding and the respect of this complexity, in order to direct it towards multiple forms of landscape.

Biography

Daniela Buonanno. Naples 1985. Architect and PhD in Urban Design and Planning at the University of Naples Federico II, Department of Architecture. Her research focuses on the integration between urban space and the rural space in the contemporary city, her thesis is called "Ruralurbanism. Productive landscapes". As an expert of the subject, she teaches and researches in the laboratories of Architectonical and Urban Planning and Architectural Composition of the Department of Architecture of Naples. The results of her researches are presented in articles, papers and books (Eurau'10- Eurau'12- Eurau'14- Eurau'16). She has attended numerous national and international conferences and workshops about the transformation of the city. Since 2014, she works at the Urban Planning Department of the City Council of Naples.

Carmine Piscopo. Naples 1968. Architect, PhD in Urban Design and Planning, and, from 2010, he is Full Professor of Architectural and Urban Composition at the Department of Architecture of Naples Federico II, where he is a member of the Board of the Doctorate in Architecture. Author of essays and articles on architecture and the city, some of its publications are "Architecture and Commons" (with Daniela Buonanno, Florence 2017), "Public Domain" (Anversa 2017), "Criticità e Architettura" (Genova 2015), "The City, Desiring Machine" (Rome 2012), "Le Corbusier and the Crossed Paths. The Watercolors between Art and Architecture and the Voyage d'Orient" (Rome 2012).

From May 2013, he is Assessor in the city of Naples for the Urban Policies and Planning and Common Goods. He is also the coordinator of the working group for the establishment of the Metropolitan City of Naples and the Great Plan for the Historical Centre / Unesco site of Naples.